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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001742

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SUBJECT: STRATEGIC SECURITY DIALOGUE LAUNCHED WITH ISCI

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/REL MNF-I) SUMMARY: On May 20, Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi told Deputy Chief of Mission Speckhard that the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (ISCI) looked forward to developing a "special" security partnership with the United States. Abdel Mehdi recommended advancing the relationship by focusing on four key issues of mutual concern: detention holding and operations; militia demobilization; reconciliation; and countering malign Iranian influence. The DCM said the USG saw such a partnership as critical to its success in Iraq and agreed to the topics for upcoming discussions, but added that security institution reform should be added as a near term topic. The DCM used the opportunity of the meeting to garner Abdel Mehdi's support for the latest draft of the Hydrocarbon law. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C/REL MNF-I) Vice President and ISCI member Adel Abdel Mehdi hosted the first in what is to be a series of meetings on advancing the USG-ISCI strategic security partnership. In addition to Abdel Mehdi, other ISCI participants included BADR Organization leaders Hade al-Amri and Tahseen al-Azawi. The DCM was accompanied by MNF-I Major General Scott.

All ISCI Detainees are Innocent  
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¶3. (C/REL MNF-I) Abdel Mehdi told the DCM and MG Scott that ISCI would like MNF-I detention problems to be addressed through the bilateral security dialogue. Abdel Mehdi said MNF-I is unjustly detaining "dozens" of innocent ISCI members. These victims, he claims, have been presented with no evidence against them and have been denied adequate judicial review. He said that ISCI had asked for evidence and family visits, but MNF-I had ignored the requests. Abdel Mehdi said MNF-I interpreters were also to blame for the unfair detentions, saying they insert their own bias during investigations and provide invalid information. The DCM countered that MNF-I upholds internationally accepted detention standards, that they ensure all detainees receive regular legal review, and that they are currently reviewing their detention policy. The DCM recommended detention be the topic of the next meeting and that MNF-I Commanding General for Detention Operations Major General Stone provide a comprehensive briefing on current MNF-I detention practices and proposals under review such as expedited reviews and a parole program.

ISCI Wants Pre-Consultative Raids  
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¶4. (C/REL MNF-I) Abdel Mehdi also called for changes to MNF-I's execution of military operations against ISCI

members. Abdel Mehdi said MNF-I's wide ranging raids had resulted in destruction of ISCI offices, unjust seizure of its weaponry, and the illegal detention of its members. Abdel Mehdi said he had discussed this concern with former Ambassador Khalilzad who, he said, committed to working with ISCI leadership and MNF-I to develop new raid procedures. Khalilzad had agreed to review with MNF-I possible modifications, including pre-consultations with ISCI leaders before MNF-I led raids and provisions for ISCI to "quietly" turn over members identified as wanted by MNF-I. The DCM agreed to such a discussion, but reminded Abdel Mehdi that MNF-I is conducting hundreds of raids as part of ongoing security plan and that ISCI/BADR was not being singled out or given particular focus. The DCM also stressed the importance of ISCI working in good faith with MNF-I to ensure that Badr and ISCI are self-policing and identifying and turning in "bad eggs".

#### ISCI Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

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15. (C/REL MNF-I) Al Amri said Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration should also be a priority topic for the security dialogue. He lamented that four years after Paul Bremer signed CPA 91, there has been no action by the USG or the Iraqi Government to effectively deal with the high level of unsecured weapons "all over Iraq" and the intensification of militia activity. Meanwhile, ISCI has taken the step of transforming its military wing, the BADR Corps, into a political entity called the BADR Organization. Al Amri said the USG and ISCI needed to work together to get DDR on track and ensure former BADR military members were integrated into the Iraqi security forces and civilian jobs or retired and provided a decent pension.

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#### ISCI on Reconciliation

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16. (C/REL MNF-I) Al Amri said ISCI is interested in discussing a way forward on reconciliation and believes it is critical to stabilizing Iraq. ISCI, however, is frustrated with the current approach to reconciliation. Al Amri opined that the USG is so focused on bringing Ba'athists into the political process, that it has neglected the victims of Iraq, the Shia. Al Amri said the USG spends day and night trying to empower the former enemy while the Shia see no improvements in their lives. He said the Shia are left without basic services and security and in fear of unfair detention. Al Amri said it is time the USG worked with ISCI to develop a more balanced approach, warning that if the USG continues along its current path, the Ba'athists will resume power in Iraq.

17. (C/REL MNF-I) The DCM agreed to work with ISCI on reconciliation. He stressed that the USG expected ISCI to improve regulation and transparency of the BADR Organization, noting that even Al Amri has admitted in the past that BADR had some bad elements. The DCM also stressed the importance of "opening the door" to the reconcilable elements and highlighted the U.S. support for Shias noting that they dominate the federal and provincial governments as a result of the liberation and democratic institutions that we helped Iraqis put in place.

#### ISCI's Honest Friends, the Iranians

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18. (C/REL MNF-I) As part of this security dialogue, Abdel Mehdi said he would continue to be open about his alliance with Iran and speak frankly with the USG about Tehran. Abdel Mehdi said ISCI only deals with honest Iranian interlocutors and had made clear to them that ISCI will not tolerate any Iranian action that targets Iraqi Security Forces or Coalition troops. Abdel Mehdi said he was a bit surprised

that the USG is always complaining about the ISCI/BADR-Iran relationship while not saying anything about the strong KRG/Peshmerga-Iranian connection. According to Abdel Mehdi, the latter partnership is much stronger and has been for decades. The DCM said the USG will continue to respect a healthy Iraq-Iran relationship and welcome economic, cultural, and religious ties, but would not tolerate malign Iranian actions or ISCI/BADR cooperation that adversely affected Iraq's stability.

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